written at the Saint's dictation by one of her secretaries. Not a single word written by Catherine's own hand has been preserved. Catherine's earliest letters were written for her by her women companions, Alessa, Cecca, and occasionally Giovanna Pazzi; as also were probably the more purely domestic of her later ones, and those addressed particularly to women. Afterwards, Cristofano Guidini and Gherardo Buonconti seem occasionally to have written at her dictation ; but, during the greater part of her political activity, she had three regular secretaries, the three young nobles whom we have already so often met: Neri di Landoccio Pagliaresi, Stefano di Corrado Maconi, and Francesco di Messer Vanni Malavolti. Francesco Malavolti has left us a delightful picture of Catherine's method of composition at this time. We see her dictating simultaneously to these three young men, three letters : one to Pope Gregory, another to Bernabo Visconti, the third to a certain great nobleman whose name Francesco does not remember. She dictates now to one, now to another; at times with her face covered by her hands or veil, as though absorbed in thought, at others with clasped hands and head raised up to Heaven ; at intervals she seems rapt in ecstasy, but, nevertheless, goes on continuously speaking. Then, suddenly, all three stop writing, look puzzled, and appeal to her for aid. They have all taken down the same sentence, but for which of them was it meant ? Catherine smilingly assures them that there is no cause for concern : " Dearest sons, do not trouble, for you have done this by the work of the Holy Spirit; when the letters are finished, we shall see how these words fit in with our intention, and then arrange what had best be done." And, of course, Francesco tells us that, though the three letters were to such different people and included various matters, the words in dispute were found to prove essential to all the three.[1] Fra Raimondo tells us that on these occasions she dictated the letters rapidly and continuously,

[1] *Contfstatio Francisci de Malavoltts,* cap. vii. (Casanatense MS., pp. 460, 461). It is impossible now to identify these letters, as that to Bernabo Visconti is clearly not the one still preserved to us, which contains no passage common to any of Catherine's letters to Gregory.